"Wasn't my fault."

In which TONY STEWART listens patiently while IAN PAICE (⟵) and DAVID COVERDALE (⟶) explain (within the limits of decent reticence and Not Ratting On Mates) . . .

"Wasn't my fault either."

WHY THE PURPLING HAD TO STOP

"AT THE Empire Pool Deep Purple rule.
"The roaring audience of ten thousand or so press their hands to their heads as their ears get pinned back flat by the band's first number, and David Coverdale steps forward.
" 'We've come to quash rumours that Purple have finished.'
"Lapping up that welcome news, the crowd call for more, little realising in their ecstatic bliss that within the group things do seem decidedly amiss. It's not only possible, but highly probable that changes in personnel will occur.
"Even backstage, an aura of discontent is evident before the gig. There's no feeling of an event about to happen, which a Wembley gig certainly should be. And the obvious joviality between Lord, Coverdale, Paice and Bolin (Hughes isn't around) is only superficial. To me the spirit of the band seems drained.
"Weariness is offered as an excuse, but more likely discontent is creeping in. Like an unattended case of dry rot.
"They all merely go through the motions of a formula which becomes increasingly boring as the set continues. And you can even tell when the dry ice is going to be poured onto the stage.
"No, they're not finished. Not quite."
(Extracts from a live review, March 1976.)

and why these guys ain't going out no more

FOUR MONTHS later, Paice is lounging in a chair with one leg dangling over the arm and the other stretched out onto a coffee table, when he swivels his head and flashes a defiant look across at me.

"There is *no way,*" he asserts confidently, "you're going to get me to say who did what. There were certain goings on which I wouldn't make public in a thousand years, 'cos they were between a couple of people, and they were *very* private. They're the sort of things which are *nobody* else's business.

"But you can say," he advises unhelpfully, "there was certain discontent between people. It would be unfair of me to say who it was between, what it was about or why, because it could be detrimental to somebody else's future career. I *might* even be talking about myself . . ."

He pauses, grins lightly and shrugs, knowing damn well he ain't.

". . . But there again, you never know."

That is — and we all know it — a somewhat superficial generalisation. Try it for size: Deep Purple — one of the world's biggest money earners, who've made a dozen albums and survived three major personnel changes during their eight-year career — last week announced their disbandment *because there was certain discontent between certain persons unknown.*

Uh-huh. This is *not good enough.*

We've jetted over to Munich, checked into the Arabella Hotel and arranged to talk to the former drummer and ex-lead singer (Paice and David Coverdale respectively), of the now-defunct Deep Purple in the hope of uncovering a greater revelation than that.

Now we're face to Paice and he certainly isn't bleeding on the carpet. Instead he plays it discreetly cool; brandishing the infuriating smile of a man who's suppressing The Real Scam.

"We thought it wrong to go on. We were conning people; we were conning ourselves; we were bending our musical morals as far as we could to continue as Purple. There comes a point where you can honestly say: I'm not doing it for the money. And that was it."

When you're rich enough, eh?

"I don't know," he ponders. "I'm *not* rich enough. I want to earn some more cash. I live well, but I'm not sure I can live well for the rest of my life.

"If it had just been for the cash we could have probably squeezed another two or three albums out of Purple and taken it off the road as a working unit. That's a sure fire way of making money."

Too true. *Some* unkind people said it was the only reason you continued with DP after Ritchie Blackmore took off on his electric broomstick.

Placid Paice remains passive.

"You can see there would be a logical process for some people to think that," he agrees, rationally. "With the same line-up we still might have had personal differences, but we could have still gone into the studio twice a year and made an album which would sell at least three of four hundred thousand copies around the world. You're talking about a lot of cash there.

"But it's a lie. It's a big con. I do have capital and I do have some resources to rely on, and I couldn't lie like that. Jon (Lord) couldn't; David couldn't. The other guys, *I don't think,* could lie like that.

"I say *don't think,*" he quickly explains, "because they were in the other camp and we ended up not *really* knowing them too well."

And the briefest of clues, but already it's buried as Perilous Paicey pushes hurriedly on.

"It's the hardest thing in the world to get enthusiastic about something you're bored with."

Deep Purple, he's saying, wouldn't sell their souls for rock and roll.

OF COURSE there is significantly more to the collapse of Poiple, not least the personality conflicts. Ian Paice isn't outrageously controversial, presumably because he has accepted the inevitable and it's no use crying over spilt milk — or blood. Yet with a continual glint in his eye and the odd innuendo here and there, the trouble-makers are named, if not uncompromisingly numbered.

The Big Crunch came on their last British tour.

"I knew we were finished from about the third song in on the first night on that tour, which was at Leicester," he explains.

"Part of the failure of the English tour . . . and this is nothing against the guy musically . . . is Tommy's inability to accept the differences in attitude with European and American audience. An American audience will give you a little more time and will be patient with you. And Tommy's the sort of player who needs that indulgence of the audience to build himself up.

"We told him he wouldn't get it in England and he'd have to go out there and from the first chord he'd have to excite the kids to make them want to watch him.

"I don't think he took that advice too seriously, and I think he suffered for it."

He blew it, j'accuse.

"I can't really say anything about that," Paice diplomatically returns my serve. "I've stated why I think it happened. It shouldn't have happened. But people are people."

Glenn Hughes, he continues, also ignored advice that Purple were a white rock-'n'roll band and not a soul band, which apparently Hughes would have liked them to be, and so he and Bolin sided with each other. Two camps emerged: Paice, Lord and Coverdale in one, and the bassist and guitarist in the other.

"There was this little rift," Paice recalls, "and eventually it got to be a big bloody rift. To the point where to save any argument at gigs people would just stay away from each other.

"There was a couple of tantrums, but it never got *really* nasty. It just seemed easier to let each faction mumble and groan on its own and hope that when you came together on stage it would sort itself out. And generally it did. It did all the way through our Australian and American tours. Then it fell flat on its arse on the English gigs.

"It was a bloody great raspberry of a tour, that was."

He briefly elaborates, occasionally revealing bitterness and resentment with an off-hand remark which he quickly tries to bury in platitudes. He mentions losing presence as a band on stage due to persons "just waffling off on solos."

And he adds, "But when people get super hung up on being stars then you get trouble, because you can't stop them. And we had a bit of that appearing. I'm not going to say from whom, but we had it.

■ *Continued over page*

D. Purple v. D. Throat

"Wheh!"

■ *From previous page*

"Purple had a good run for its money and it started to slip a bit at the end. I think we lost quite a bit on that English tour. If anybody came out of it unscathed it was probably me, but *certain people* lost a lot of their credibility. It was time to stop it going any further. We said if this last thing didn't work after Ritchie left that we'd just top it. And so we did.

"When you look back it was maybe a chance we shouldn't have taken. It was a calculated risk, and it didn't really come off."

In fact the ghost of R. Blackmore emerges frequently during our conversation, and quite obviously the band belatedly realised their former guitarist was a dominant and important character who had, although they never fully acknowledged it, assumed leadership. Once he was gone they crumbled, and Bolin was not a *suitable* replacement.

"You might," Paice suggests, "put it down as this: International bands are very hard to keep together, simply because we grow up one way and they grow up another. Personalities do clash. Not so much socially, but musically. And probably more so between American and British musicians than anybody else, I'd think.

"We never knew that because we'd never done it before. We found out the hard way."

Tommy Bolin is American. The rest of the band were English.

But other factors were involved (explained at length by Paice) which tone down any disharmony that existed and avert the accusing finger — away from either Bolin or Hughes.

The other most important reason for the demise was simple musical frustration, which causes laid back Ian to admit Purple was a cliched concept. Unfortunately their growth was constricted by audiences refusing to accept anything other than Heavy Metal. "Purple started out and got its recognition by being a thundering great rock and roll band, and *nothing* else. The fact that the musicians involved were very good didn't seem to matter. Nothing would throw the people's minds about what they expected to see.

"We found we couldn't do it anymore with complete honesty. Albums were starting to be copies of other albums, with just different titles and different chord sequences, and in the end we got bored with playing it.

"So we said: That's it; it's gone; let's stop it before it skydives."

AT THIS juncture it should be made clear that the decision to finally disband was made immediately following the British tour, and due to contractual obligations and complications remained unofficial until only last week. For example, David Coverdale quit five minutes after the end of their final British gig in Liverpool.

"I'd had enough," Coverdale explains, settling himself down in the chair Paice has just vacated. "I was asked to keep quiet.

"I didn't stay with them from contractual necessity, but it was an emotional commitment. I felt I needed to give it a try for the sake of several other members of the band. And I blew it.

"But I'm not ashamed of any of the shows I did. I worked my bollocks off.

"Yet how could I convince an audience that it was good, if I wasn't convinced myself?

"Like, you'd get some poseur on the stage who thinks he's good enough to entertain kids on his own for 30 minutes?"

What's this? Five minutes into the rap and the singer who replaced Ian Gillan three years ago seems prepared to reveal a damn sight more than one of the original members.But then that's not surprising, because obviously Dave C is resentful of the fact that with the last band he was pushed out of the spotlight and his infrequent appearances on stage were merely brief reminders that Deep Purple was *actually* a five, and not a four, man band.

"Definitely not **my** *fault."*

So who was the poseur?

"All of us were guilty of it," he hedges, unexpectedly. "All of us had our posing things. Let's face it, I didn't have much time to pose. But that was because of my own weakness. But it was weakness on everybody's part. I'm a lot to blame for being spineless. I should have said: Look, I want *this!* Really, in the back of my mind I thought I shouldn't have to. I was a member of a five piece outfit. People in the band should have been saying that to me as well.

"But you get these weird, insecure feelings that they might be trying to row you out, which wasn't the case. No one was talking about sacking me. I left."

There were, however, other incidents which infuriated Coverdale.

"We were standing backstage at an American gig and *this one person* said: 'I'm not going on. I don't want to go on'. There were 20,000 people going bananas out front and we were being held to ransom."

Who did that?

"One of the band."

But which one?

"Tony," he sighs impatiently, "come on! I don't want to come out sounding petty."

Discretion seems to be the brief of both Paice and now Coverdale, as he falls into a moody, thoughtful silence. For a time he bites his tongue and elaborates on the consequences of the total disbandment, following similar lines to those already laid by Ian Paice. Slowly his chagrin re-asserts itself.

"But we were working for a concept," he says somewhat regretfully, "and then I got the impression that everybody was trying to inject their little bits of fiddlydiddly. Then it got disjointed and became too abstract. It went off in tangents.

"It wasn't how Deep Purple should have been anymore."

He scolds others for being "silly and immature". In fact the band was split into two camps, but the responsibility for the disbandment rested with each of the members.

"You're wanting me to make a positive statement," he observes, "which I would love to do. But I ain't gonna knock any one.

"For such a hard bunch of blokes, though, we got really spineless in the end; just accepting the situation and not doing anything about it. I wanted out."

Later he does commit himself on specific issues. For instance . . .

"I refuse to stand on stage with Glenn while he's doing his bloody 'Georgia On My Mind', right? And I'm standing there in the dark saying, 'C'mon, get it out of your system'. Where's the band?

" 'C'mon, Tommy get it out'; 'c'mon Jon do your classical bits' — and I'd go off and have a cigarette. Where's that *at?* That ain't no fucking' band. Then Ian turns round and says: 'Dave, stop bellowing so much'."

He grimaces.

"I finished in March, and talking to you now is like reliving it a bit, and I don't want to relive the feelings of those shows: my tears in Glasgow and Liverpool when I was crying on roadies' shoulders. And when Ian Paice comes up and asks me on the strength of our friendship to go back on . .

"I just wanted to find a hole and dive in it."

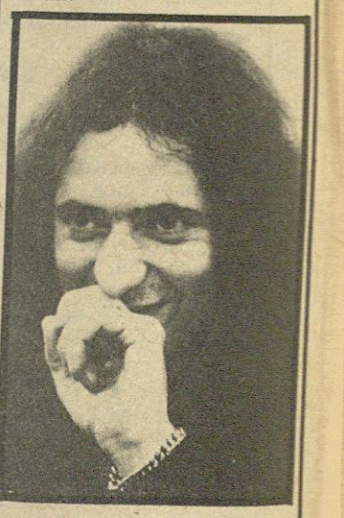
ONCE he makes these admissions Coverdale becomes decidedly more cheerful, and quickly directs the conversation around to his own solo project: an album called "White Snake" which he will record in London next month with the assistance of former Snafu/Juicy Lucy guitarist Mick Moody.

He joined Purple as an unknown boutique salesman from Redcar, and now three years later his own career will be afforded the attention any ex-singer of a Name Band is entitled to. Sensitively he quickly justifies himself.

"I got that gig on the strength of my talent. Nobody did me a favour. Those cats wanted me to work. Like, I've got the goods to do it, and up to now people have only heard one facet of my talent."

He has regrets about Purple's disbandment, but now he is optimistic and enthusiastic about his own music. And similarly Paice, who is to form a big band with Jon — "it'll be a sort of heavy Mad Dogs" — isn't remorsefully nostalgic about winding up a band which in 1973 sold, he claims, 12 million records in the States alone.

"Just because I've stopped playing with Purple doesn't mean to say I've stopped playing rock'n'roll," Ian explains cheerfully. "I'm just changing firms."



"Don't blame me — I left ages ago."